

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Flashbags

Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center

Flashbags: Sewing Much Better with Assistance from Vermont MEP

Client Profile:

Flashbags is a web-based, retail business located in South Burlington, Vermont. The product line consists of artistic handbags and unique accessories. Founded in 2005, Flashbags employs 5 people.

Situation:

After receiving local press and national exposure, Flashbags was faced with the challenge of creating a manufacturing facility that would enable them to produce ten times more units than they were producing due to an unexpected increase in demand. In addition to their growth, Flashbags needed to tackle other areas of concern such as waste disposal and the physical layout of their facility. The company decided to seek assistance from the Vermont Manufacturing Extension Center (VMEC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to address the issues of low profit margins and high variable costs.

Solution:

VMEC facilitated a Lean 101 workshop and then led 4 days of workshops addressing 5S and Value Stream Mapping. As a result of their Lean training, Flashbags is now able to move one unit through the line in an average of 26 minutes rather than several hours. The physical changes in the workspace and addition of visual indicators have reduced chaos, improved employee morale, and increased productivity.

Results:

- * Doubled gross profit margin.
- * Increased production ten-fold.

Testimonial:

"With the help of VMEC, we were able to make physical changes to our workspace which increased efficiency and added visual indicators to reduce chaos. Our employees feel confident, comfortable, and accountable for everything they do. With the increased training and newfound confidence, the employee morale is high and production has increased dramatically. Now that the production floor is operating more smoothly, there is more time in the day to manage financial and administrative aspect of the business and to formulate a strategic sales and marketing plan."

Alicia Marchildon, Co-Founder